a game of you

part one

neil gaiman

shawn mcmanus

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the SANDMAN™

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

THE LAND.

"What will we do, Primado? Why, we will perish. We will all die, and the Land will die, and the world will die, and the Cuckoo will reign in bleak dominion over all.

"That is what we will do."

"It mus' not happen, Luz."

"Must not? With the Princess gone, what else can we do?"

"But Tantoblin, 'e swore to come. 'e swore to bring us tidings."

"The Tantoblin will not come. I felt him die. The Black Guard found him in the night."

"You're makin' it up, Luz. Imaginin' things. Honest."

"No. I felt it inside of my heart. I felt him die."

"But what tidings could the Tantoblin have brought us, save that She has abandoned us, and the Children of the Cuckoo continue to spread across the land?"

"Well, there's Colonel Knowledge. 'e once said 'e would aid our struggle..."

"He waits on the border. Perhaps he will help us. Perhaps not."

"I'm hungry."

"We're all hungry, Wilkinson."

"I never said we weren't. Did I say we weren't? I don't think anybody here heard me say we weren't. I was just pointin' out that I'm bloody starving, that's all.

"And I'm not just hungry.

"I'm hungry and I'm cold."

"Actually, I'm hungry and I'm cold, and I'm miserable and we're all going to die."

"For the love of Murphy, Wilkinson, will you stop saying that?"

"Luz said it first. I was just agreein' with her. And I am hungry."

"Martin Tenbones. You have not yet spoken. What say you?"

"I say that She has not abandoned us. And I have the Porpentine. The Hierogram remains unbroken. The Land is far from lost."

"I think she mus' be dead. Or she 'as forgotten us."

"She cannot have forgotten us. But she may be hurt, in her other world. My friends, I have been thinking on this for a long time now..."

"and?"

"And it seems to me that if She cannot come to us, one of us must go to her. We must call her back."

"How?"

"I have the Porpentine. It will find her."

"But..."

"I must find her, in whatever distant world she waits. Else the land must be lost to the cold and the dark, and the Cuckoo prevail over all."

NEW YORK.

1

SLAUGHTER ON FIFTH AVENUE

WRITTEN BY NEIL GAIMAN
DRAWN BY SHAWN McMANUS
COLORED BY DANIEL VOZZO
LETTERED BY TODD KLEIN
EDITED BY KAREN BERGER
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SANDMAN

FEATURING CHARACTERS CREATED BY GAIMAN, KIETH AND DRINGENBERG.

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

YEAH? I'M COMING...

BARBIE? IT'S ME, HONEY. I THOUGHT WE COULD GO SHOPPING.

WANDA? I WAS ASLEEP. COME IN.

I'M SORRY. OBVIOUSLY I'VE WRENCHED YOU OUT OF A *DELIGHTFUL* DREAM.

WHAT *WAS* IT? WRITHING ON A BEAR-SKIN WITH *SOME* HUNK? OR JUST ONE OF THE *DULL* ONES, WHERE YOU'RE BACK AT SCHOOL AND YOU FORGOT YOUR HOMEWORK...

I *DON'T* DREAM, WANDA.

OHHH *COME ONNN*, BARBIE-BOOBIE. *EVERYBODY* DREAMS.

I DON'T.

WELL?

WELL WHAT?

ARE WE GOING SHOPPING?

I'M BROKE.

SO'S YOUR AUNTIE WANDA. BUT DO YOU THINK I'M GOING TO LET A LITTLE THING LIKE *THAT* STOP ME?

I LOOK A MESS.

YOU'RE TALKING. WITH *THOSE* CHEEKBONES? I'D *KILL* FOR THOSE CHEEKBONES. MM. WELL, *MAIM*, MAYBE.

YOU GOT BETTER CHEEKBONES THAN ME, WANDA. GIVE ME A COUPLA MINUTES TO PUT MY FACE ON, AND WAKE UP.

YOU WANNA MAKE SOME COFFEE?

MAKE COFFEE? YOU WANT *ME* TO MAKE *YOU* COFFEE?

YEAH. IS THAT BENEATH YOU OR SOMETHING?

NO. IT'S JUST MY COFFEE *ALWAYS* TASTES KIND OF LIKE SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN *DEAD* FOR A WHILE.

I MAKE A *GREAT* CHOCOLATE SOUFFLÉ, THOUGH. WOULD YOU LIKE A CHOCOLATE SOUFFLE?

COFFEE.

OKAY. YOU DON'T KNOW *WHAT* YOU'RE MISSING.

DO YOU TAKE CREAM?

UH HUH.

SO WHERE *IS* IT?

IN THE REFRIGERATOR.

FIRST PLACE I LOOKED.

THERE'S ONLY THIS CARTON OF FUZZY *GREEN* STUFF IN THERE NOT EVEN *YOU* COULD DRINK. YOU *MIGHT* WANT TO DONATE IT TO SCIENCE, OR TAKE IT TO YOUR LEADER, BUT...

SO GO *GET* SOME. THESSALY'LL HAVE CREAM. OR THE GUYS UP-STAIRS.

THESSALY? IT'S ME, WANDA. YOU IN?

OH. HI, WANDA.

YEAH. YOU GOT ANY CREAM?

I GOT SOME *SOY-MILK* STUFF. THAT OKAY?

NO. NO, I DON'T THINK SO.

IT'S FOR BARBIE.

I DON'T THINK SHE'D BE SATISFIED WITH *ANYTHING* THAT WASN'T SQUIRTED FROM THE UDDER OF A *REAL COW.*

NO. NO. SORRY.

NO PROBLEM. SEEYA, SWEET THING.

HI. *HAZEL?* *FOXGLOVE?* IT'S *ME.*

C'MON. OPEN UP. I *KNOW* YOU'RE IN THERE.

WE'RE NOT HERE. WE WENT OUT AGES AGO.

DON'T. THE EAGLE EYES OF SHERLOCK WANDA *CANNOT* BE FOOLED.

I'VE ALREADY SPOTTED A NUMBER OF *CLUES.* CIGARETTE ASH. PARSLEY IN THE BUTTER. ALL *THAT* SHIT.

LET ME *IN* OR I CALL OUT THE *BLOODHOUNDS.*

WHO IS IT, HAZE?
IT'S WANDA.
WHAT DOES SHE WANT?
I DON'T KNOW.
WELL ASK HER.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
MM. CREAM. OR MILK. JUST A TEENY BIT. YOU GOT ANY?
I SUPPOSE. WHAT'S IN IT FOR *US?*
MY UNDYING GRATITUDE. AND BARBIE'S. IT'S FOR HER COFFEE.
SHE WANTS CREAM.
YEAH, OKAY.
FOXGLOVE SAYS IT'S OKAY. DON'T TAKE TOO MUCH.
ME?
SAY, HAZEL. HOW DO PEOPLE ACTUALLY MILK A SOY BEAN?
FOX? SHE WANTS TO KNOW HOW YOU MILK A SOY BEAN.
THREE-LEG STOOL AND A TIN PAIL. AND *WARM* YOUR *HANDS FIRST.*
HI, FOX. HOW MANY ARE YOU UP TO NOW?
EIGHTY. AND STILL COUNTING.
THAT'S GOOD. WHAT DO I CARRY THE MILK DOWN IN?
HAZEL? THIS IS A *CUTE FROG MUG.*
UH HUH.
YOU EXPECT *ME* TO BE SEEN IN *PUBLIC* CARRYING A *CUTE FROG MUG?*
WELL, IF YOU DON'T *WANT* IT...
I DIDN'T *SAY* I DIDN'T WANT IT.

THANK YOU, LADIES.

THIS ACT OF KINDNESS HAS TOUCHED ME MORE DEEPLY THAN YOU CAN EVER KNOW.

YOU'RE SO FULL OF IT, WANDA.

HI GEORGE. HOW'S IT HANGING?

WHY I'M JUST DANDY. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ASKING.

THIS? OH, DON'T WORRY. IT'S NOT MY CUTE FROG MUG. I'M CARRYING IT FOR A FRIEND.

OUR COFFEE, MADAME. AND WHAT ARE *WE* TODAY, THEN?

I'M A CHESS BOARD. YOU'RE JUST TACKY, WANDA.

OKAY. I'M READY. WHERE ARE WE GOING?

TIFFANY'S.

TIFFANY'S? YOU'RE CRAZY.

WE'RE *BROKE*, RIGHT?

YEAH.

SO IT DOESN'T MATTER *WHERE* WE GO, WE CAN'T AFFORD IT.

RIGHT.

SO WE'RE GOING TO TIFFANY'S.

OKAY.

YECCHY COFFEE.

I *WARNED* YOU.

CUTE MUG, THOUGH.

PRINCESS BARBARA? THE SUBWAY AWAITS YOU. SHAKE YOUR LITTLE BUNS...

SO WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR, EXACTLY? I MEAN, IF THAT'S NOT A DUMB QUESTION.

No, it is not a foolish question.

However, I am not sure that I know the answer.

Past and future both cast their ripples into the dreaming, Matthew.

Something is happening. That is why I have come to this place.

Just wait.

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

That was a beginning, Matthew. Something travelled from one state of existence to another.

It came from one of the more distant skerries of dream.

Let us observe the consequences.

Interesting. Great winds are coming, Matthew, and darkness, and much pain.

Do you see?

One of the Skerries is dying...

I fear only grief can be the outcome.

SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT, BOSS?

Do about it? The Skerries are distant islets in the shoals of dream. They live, they die. They come and go.

Why should I do anything about it?

"DON'T YOU JUST *LOVE* THE SUBWAY? I JUST HAVE TO SET FOOT ON A SUBWAY TRAIN, AND IT'S LIKE A *MAGIC CARPET*. Y'KNOW? IT COULD TAKE YOU *ANYWHERE*."

"YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I'M AFRAID OF."

YUHGODDANYSPARECHANGE?

I GAVE AT THE OFFICE ALREADY. BUG OFF AND DIE.

HERE.

YEAHTHANKS.

EEEH. TAKE IT AWAY. I DON'T LIKE DOGS.

I DON'T LIKE DOGS. I'M SCARED OF DOGS.

I DON'T LIKE DOGS.

HEY, DON'T WORRY ABOUT *ROWLEY*. *HE* WON'T HURT YOU. HE'S JUST A LITTLE *PUPPY*, AREN'T YOU, ROWLEY?

I DON'T LIKE DOGS. I'M SCARED OF DOGS. I DON'T LIKE THEM.

LISTEN, HE'S A PUPPY, HE'S ON A LEASH. SO LAY OFF, WILLYA?

I'M SCARED OF DOGS. I DON'T LIKE DOGS.

I JUS' DON'T LIKE DOGS.

ANOTHER OF THE WONDERFUL SIGHTS OF OUR FAIR CITY.

DON'T.

POOR THING.

YOU GOTTA DEVELOP A THICKER HIDE IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE A REAL NEW YORKER, BARBIE-BUBULLAH.

"THIS IS A *CITY OF CRAZIES*. THE ART LIES IN NOT LETTING *THEM* GET TO *YOU*."

I DON'T LIKE DOGS.

"I MEAN, *JESUS*, BABY. IF *I* LET IT GET TO ME, I'D NEVER GO OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

"THIS *IS* THE TWILIGHT ZONE. *I'M* IN IT, *YOU'RE* IN IT, THE *I-DON'T-LIKE-DOGS LADY'S* IN IT. SHIT HAPPENS. THIS IS NEW YORK. '*WE CONTROL THE VERTICAL*'..

DOGS. THEY SCARE ME. I'M FRIGHTENED OF 'EM.

"OR WAS THAT *THE OUTER LIMITS*?"

"SHUT UP, WANDA. IT'S *NOT* FUNNY. POOR THING. SHE WAS REALLY SCARED."

I DON'T LIKE DOGS.

DON'T. LIKE.

BIG. . .

DOG.

NOOOOOO.

BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S, THEN?

NOT YET. BREAKFAST FIRST. WINDOW SHOPPING LATER. OKAY?

I WANT A *REAL* CUP OF COFFEE. ONE I CAN *DRINK*.

YOU DON'T REMEMBER YOUR DREAMS, THEN?

I DON'T *DREAM*.

CAFE

UH-UH. *EVERYBODY* DREAMS. I READ ABOUT IT. YOU DON'T DREAM, YOU GO KOO-KOO. NO, *YOU* JUST DON'T REMEMBER THEM, IS ALL.

I REMEMBER MY DREAMS.

I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T--

I *USED* TO DREAM. I USED TO DREAM ABOUT LOTS OF THINGS.

I'D HAVE THIS *WEIRD* DREAM, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT. SAME DREAM--WELL, NOT THE *SAME* DREAM. IT CONTINUED, Y'KNOW. LIKE A *BOOK*. OR A *TV SHOW*.

SAME TIME, SAME CHANNEL. I JUST HAD TO CLOSE MY EYES...

SO WHAT HAPPENED?

I...

I DON'T KNOW. I MEAN, IT'S ALL SORT OF MIXED TOGETHER. *THAT* WAS WHEN I SPLIT WITH KEN. I WENT THROUGH A *LOAD* OF *BAD STUFF* BACK THEN, AND, I DON'T KNOW...

SOMEWHERE IN ALL THAT, THE DREAMS WENT AWAY.

I DREAM. I HAVE TERRIFIC DREAMS.

NEVER ABOUT *SEX*, THOUGH. NOT SINCE I WAS TWELVE AND HAVING MY FIRST *WET DREAMS*. NOW, *THEY* WERE REALLY MONDO WEIRD.

I ONCE DREAMED I WAS MAKING OUT WITH WEIRDZO LILA LAKE. YOU REMEMBER THE WEIRDZOS?

WANDA, *WHAT* ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THE *WEIRDZOS*, FROM THE OLD *HYPERMAN* COMICS. THEY LIVED ON THIS *SQUARE* PLANET SOMEWHERE OUT IN OUTER SPACE, AND THEY DID *EVERYTHING* BACKWARDS. "US DO OPPOSITE OF EARTH THINGS IN WEIRDZO WORLD."

THEY HAD THESE WHITE FACES, LIKE THEY WERE MADE OF CRYSTAL OR SOMETHING, AND, LIKE, THEY WERE ALL HYPERMAN OR HIS FRIENDS.

AND ALL THE WOMEN WERE LILA LAKE. THEY HAD THIS WEIRDZO CODE, AND--

ARE YOU OKAY?

NO. I DON'T THINK SO. I'M FEELING KIND OF WOOZY.

SO EAT. DRINK. C'MON. YOU GOTTA TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

I'M OKAY. I'LL BE FINE.

SO ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT YOU HAVEN'T DREAMED IN, WHAT, TWO YEARS?

YEAH, I SUPPOSE.

I MEAN, I STILL REMEMBER MY OLD DREAMS. THERE WAS THIS BIG DOG-THING WHO WAS MY BEST FRIEND, CALLED...OHH... MISTER BONEY, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

AND THE WHOLE LAND WAS IN TERRIBLE DANGER.

AND THEN MY LIFE KIND OF FELL APART.

IT WASN'T KEN'S FAULT, THOUGH. NOT REALLY. THERE WAS THIS ONE WEIRD NIGHT, AND AFTER THAT I WOULDN'T TALK TO HIM. I WOULDN'T... YOU KNOW. ESS EEE EX.

HE JUST WENT OFF AND FOUND SINDY.

I MEAN, WE WERE STILL LIVING TOGETHER, BUT HE WAS BRINGING HER HOME. IT GOT REALLY SHITTY.

HAL--HE WAS MY LANDLORD IN FLORIDA--HE'S AN OLD FRIEND OF SCARLETT'S. THEY WERE IN SOME SHOWS TOGETHER, YEARS BACK. SO HE GOT IN TOUCH WITH SCARLETT, AND SHE GOT ME THE ROOM UP HERE.

I WANTED TO BE A WEIRDZO, WHEN I GREW UP. WEIRDZO ALVIN.

ALVIN? THAT'S YOUR REAL NAME?

WANDA'S MY REAL NAME, BARBIE-BABY. ALVIN'S JUST THE NAME I WAS BORN WITH.

YOU EVER TELL ANYONE, BARBS, YOU'RE DEAD MEAT.

This is a bright place, filled with frightened people, and fast hard things that hurt and wound.

No matter.

I swore I would remain by her side forever, and until death divides us. I must walk until once more we are reunited.

This place is frightening, but I am not afraid.

People shout.

High stone cliffs tower upon each side of me.

I am brave. I am not afraid.

That the land may not die, I must walk this distant land, and be not afraid.

My death hovers near me, screeching and fluttering and giggling: a ghost death, in a ghost world. I tell myself I feel only ghost pain, and I will not let it hurt me.

I am not afraid.

O Princess Barbara, protect me now as I have protected you in days long past. O Murphy watch over me.

I will not be afraid.

I WASN'T ALLOWED TO READ COMICS WHEN I WAS A GIRL. POP SAID THEY WERE UNLADYLIKE.

HE USED TO SAY THAT LOTS OF THINGS WERE UNLADY-LIKE.

I WAS HIS LITTLE LADY. I WONDER WHAT HE'D SAY IF HE COULD SEE ME NOW.

SOMETIMES I LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND I DON'T RECOGNIZE ME.

I THINK MY PARENTS TELL THEIR FRIENDS I'M DEAD.

MY AUNT DORA WHO STILL TALKS TO ME--

--I MEAN SHE PRAYS FOR ME TO REPENT MY WICKED WAYS, BUT SHE TALKS AT LEAST--

--SHE SAYS THEY'VE STILL GOT MY OLD ROOM AT HOME ON THE FARM, JUST LIKE IT WAS WHEN I LEFT.

ALL MY OLD TOYS AND EVERYTHING LAID OUT ON THE BED. JUST LIKE IT'S A SHRINE OR SOMETHING.

TOYS...?

WANDA? WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

SORRY, FOLKS. THIS ROAD'S CLOSED. THERE'S NOTHIN' TO SEE. YOU BETTER FIND AN ALTERNATE ROUTE. I REPEAT, THERE'S NOTHIN' TO SEE...

MOVE ON...

MARTIN?

MARTIN TENBONES?

Princess?

My princess?

FIRE!

HEY!
LADY!
BACK OFF! THE THING MAY STILL BE DANGEROUS.
NO.
MARTIN TENBONES?
My princess? I came for you...
BUT YOU'RE FROM MY DREAM...
Princess... The Land... The Land needs you. Please, come back to us...
Fulfill your quest...
Around my neck... the Porpentine... take it...
Please, Princess. Take it.
...The Cuckoo... it will destroy us all...
THE PORPENTINE? BUT...
I love you, Princess. and I am sorry...
I said I would not leave your side, not while I lives... not... ever...
I...
OUT OF THE WAY, BIMBO.
WHAT THE HELL WAS IT?
I DUNNO, SOME KIND OF WOLF, MAYBE? WHO CARES? LOOK AT THOSE TEETH...
BARBIE? ARE YOU OKAY?
WHAT'S THAT YOU'VE GOT? WHAT HAPPENED?
BARBIE?
YEAH, IT'S DEAD.
BARBIE? YOU'RE CRYING.

THE LAND.

Did you feel that?

Feel what? I didn't feel anything. Did you feel anything, Prinado?

No. What you feel, Luz?

PRESS

Martin Tenbones.

I felt him. So far away...far beyond the edge of the world, I felt his pain.

I felt him die.

You're sure you weren't imaginin' it? I mean, what with bein' all worried and everythin'?

I know what I felt. He is dead.

Do you know if 'e found the Princess first?

If he had found the Princess, do you think he would have died?

You know somethin'? 'Ere, I'll tell you somethin' that'll make you laugh. You ready? Right, then:

If he is dead -- and if she's not on her way...well, then, we're going to think he was the lucky one! Dying early, getting it over with...

Well, you've got to laugh, haven't you?

Wilkinson?

Yes, Luz?

For Murphy's sake: be quiet. Please.

COME ON-- WE'RE NEARLY HOME. JUST ONE MORE STEP. THAT'S IT. AND ONE MORE...

COME ON, BARBIE. KEEP WALKING FOR AUNTIE WANDA. COME ON. ONE MORE STEP...

THERE WE GO... NOW... JUST A FEW MORE TINY STEPS AND YOU'RE SNUG IN YOUR OWN LITTLE DEN AGAIN...

COME ON, BARBIE. EVERYTHING'S OKAY...

LISTEN--IF YOU WANT I CAN STAY. OR I CAN CALL SOMEONE.

AND IT WAS ONLY A DOG, OR SOMETHING. IT DIDN'T EVEN HURT YOU, BARB. I MEAN, THEY SHOT IT BEFORE IT COULD DO ANY DAMAGE...

I THINK I WANT TO BE ON MY OWN NOW.

PLEASE.

THAT'S FINE, THEN. NO PROBLEM.

I'LL JUST BE NEXT DOOR. BANG ON THE WALL IF YOU WANT ME. HAHHAHAH. YOU KNOW THE ROUTINE.

WELL, YOU, UH, GET SOME REST.

WHEW!

UH EXCUSE ME...

UH... THE UH LADY IN UH APARTMENT ONE. SHE'S UH NOT VERY WELL?

BUTT OUT, GEORGE. IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS. SHE'S JUST HAD A HARD DAY.

THE PORPENTINE? BUT THAT WAS ONLY IN MY DREAM...

IT'S ALL COMING BACK... MARTIN TENBONES... AND THE PORPENTINE... AND THE LAND...

AND THE SCARY THING...

THE CUCKOO.

NO.

PLEASE NO. IT ISN'T REAL...

IT WAS ONLY A DREAM.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?

Barbie

YOU DON'T KNOW US, PRINCESS BARBARA.

BUT THE CHILDREN OF THE CUCKOO KNOW YOU. OH YES...

WE KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU.

End of Chapter One.

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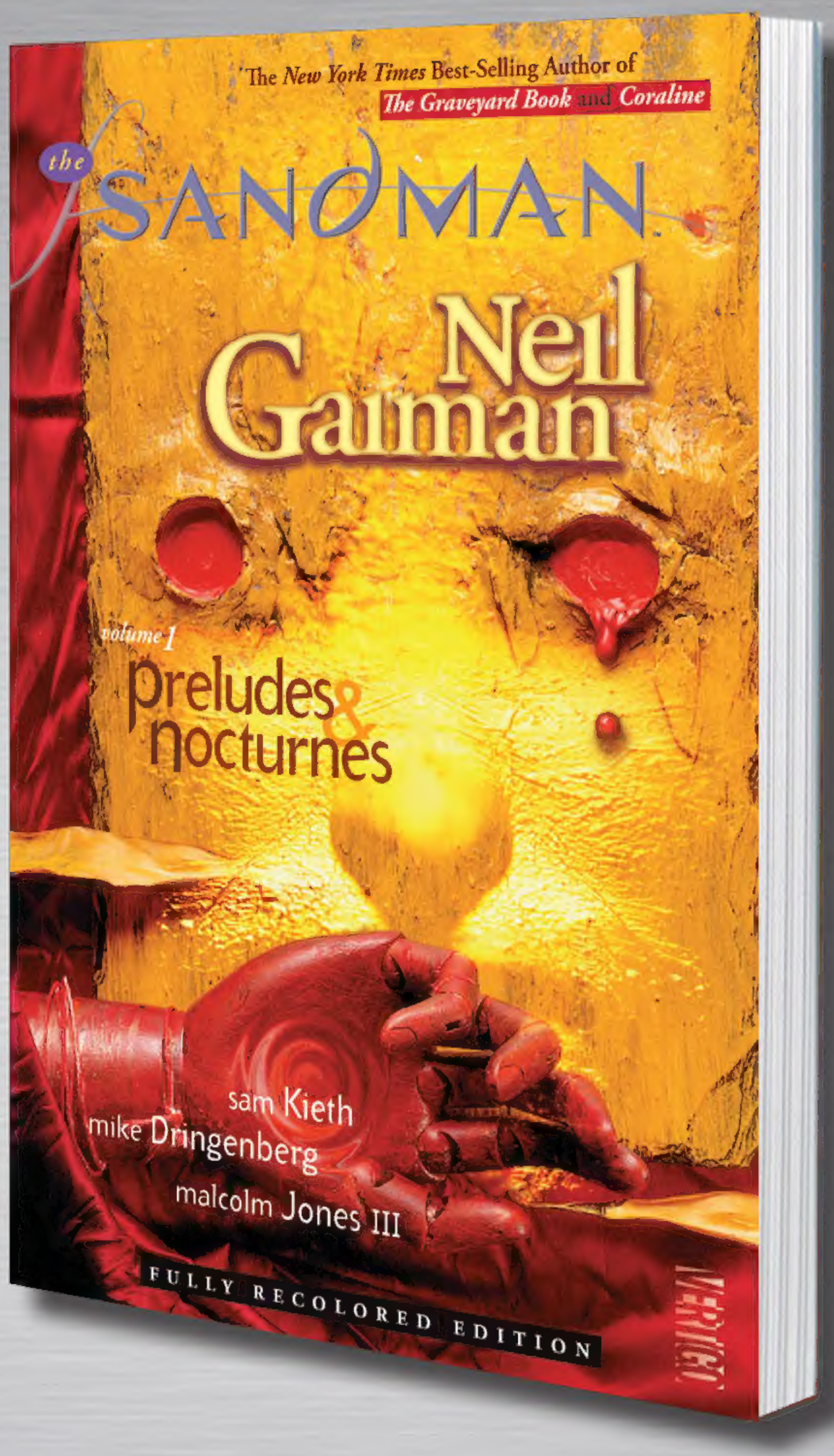

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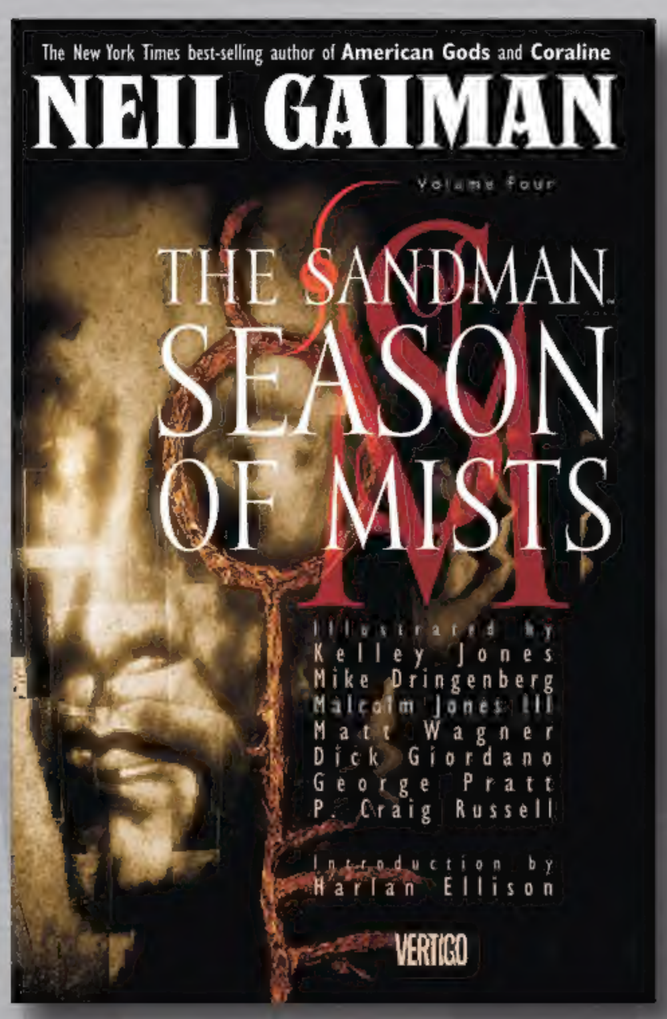

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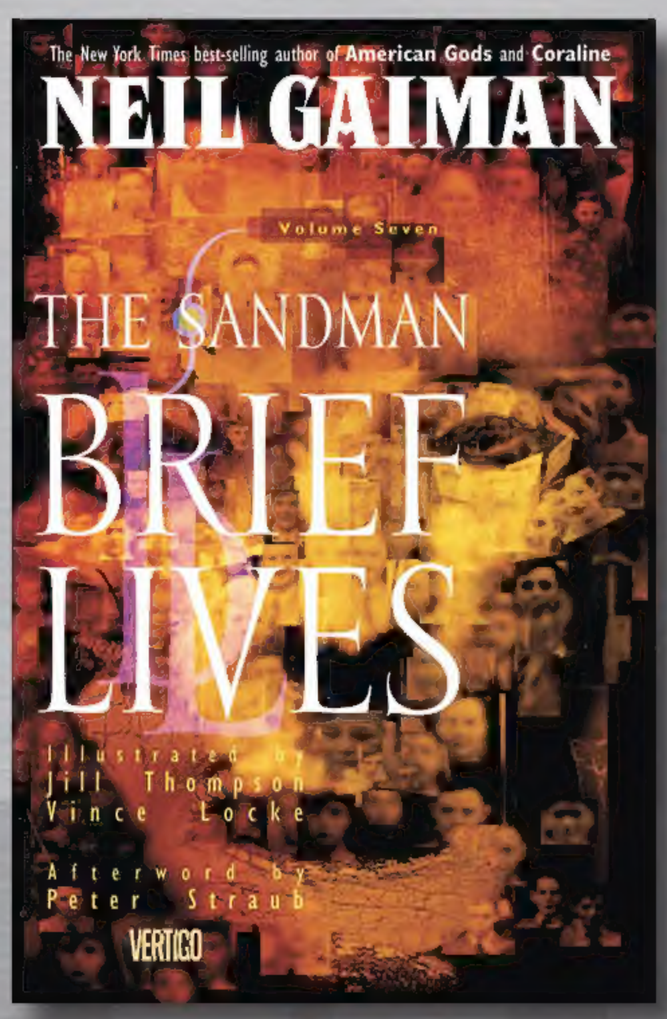

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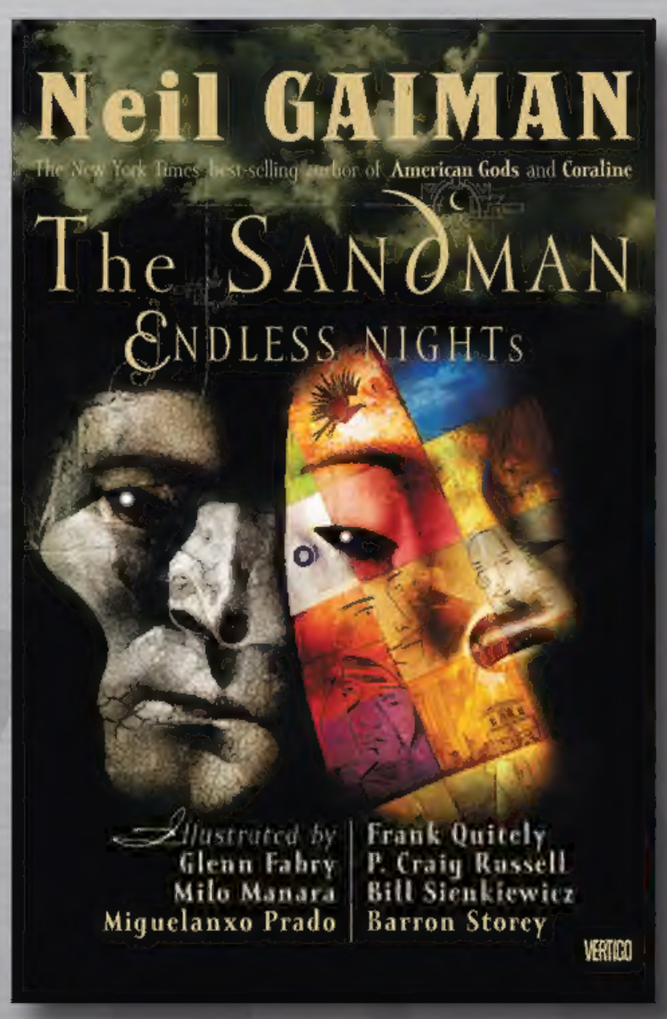

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